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CHEEKS IN THE SEATS

There are so many things tugging at your fans and prospect's discretionary dollars that you've got to get creative to get folks to attend games. They've got tons of options for entertainment -- movies, other sports, concerts, television, comedy and other live events. What's gonna get them to drive to your games, spend \$20 more dollars for popcorn and drinks, and then drive back home after a long day at work?

In an earlier section I talked about the psychology of fans so now we're going to talk about three specific tactics:

- Attracting New Fans
- Creating An Unforgettable Experience For Fans
- Turning Existing Fans Into Evangelists

#1: Attracting New Fans

Believe it or not there are tons of prospective fans in your town...as well as folks who don't live in your town who could help you grow your fan base. Prospective fans can be found by...

- (1) tapping into obvious potential fan pools (e.g. student orgs, exes, etc.)
- (2) tapping into demographics that might be interested in your sport (e.g. female executives or even male executives who have daughters or granddaughters)
- (3) former female athletes
- (4) new companies looking to align themselves with an established brand like your university (this is a SEVERELY untapped market for fans and sponsors)

#2: Creating An Unforgettable Experience For Existing Fans

Too many people think that once they get fans to the game, the work's over. Actually, it's just beginning. Yes, it's no easy feat to get fans to show up for your games and events, but it doesn't stop there. Now it's time to create a magical fan experience. That starts with the folks at the door taking tickets. I mean think about it. Those are the first folks we see when we attend an event and yet too many times those folks are the deadest folks on the planet. Now, granted, most teams are renting their game arenas. I get it. These are not your staffers so this may take a little more effort but it's well worth it.

When I played in the WNBA I used to love going to Phoenix because at halftime of the game the Mercury would play this song and allow the fans to dance in a line around the gym floor. Kids came to the games JUST to get in that line. There needs to be something that you do at your games that puts a smile on every face in the arena. This dance line did it for Phoenix.

Another thing you can do is set up a meeting with the person running the facility and talk to him or her about your new approach to marketing. Enlist their support in creating a magnificent experience for the fans. Give the facility executive a short “wish list” that might look like this.

7 Ticket Taker Tips

1. Wear a team-inspired t-shirt
2. Greet fans with a smile + signature phrase
3. Mention what a great game it should be
4. Tell the fan you're glad they came
5. Tell them there'll be a contest during the game (prime the pump with expectations)
6. When game's over, give them a coupon or something to thank them for showing up
7. Give 'em a call to action (hey, if ya had a good time tonight text “Bear Nation” to 45678 for a free burger, pizza, coffee, etc.)

#3: Turning Existing Fans Into Evangelists

First, you've gotta know 2 things about your fans.

#1: they want you to do well and

#2: if you show them how they can help you do well, they'll do their part.

The problem is that most programs never ask their fans to partner with them. Oh sure, you ask them to wear pink on game night where you're raising money for cancer but that's just once a year. What would happen if you enlisted your fans to help you 24/7/365? You think that could impact your fan base and bottom line? It most certainly would.

So, how do you go about doing that? One way is to create a Fan Club. Yes, the old fan club is still alive and well. There's a reason clubs work. We humans love "belonging" and we love "exclusivity". If you make your club membership more than sending them a bumper sticker and fundraising form each year, you'd be amazed at what your fans will help you do to grow your program.

Have you ever been to a Harley Davidson or hell, any network marketing convention? These people are on fire! They're evangelists for these brands. They're proud to belong to "the club". That's what we're striving for here. Excitement, enthusiasm and energy around your basketball team. Join the club! Membership has privileges.



To create revival-like evangelism, start here:

- Get some badass t-shirts that fans WANT to wear even when they're not at a game.
- Get your web people to develop wallpapers and timeline designs that fans WANT to use on their social media accounts.
- Get some noisemakers from an ad specialty company that your fans get when they come into your building. These will be used to annoy the hell out of your opponents.
- Get a group of fans to be committed CRAZIES. These are the folks who paint their faces and chests and sit underneath the basket to distract free throw shooters.
- Talk about how amazing your fans are every single time you do an interview or press conference.
- Put one of your "special assistants" to work on blogging about your team every single day.
- Enlist your fans to become team bloggers.

This is just a taste of what's possible, but trust me, if you'll just start here, you'll see the impact on your program immediately.